

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
April 18, 2006
3:00 p.m. (EDT)

Operator: Thank you for standing by and welcome to this Neighborhood Networks monthly conference call. Today's call is being recorded.

At this time, for opening remarks, I'll turn things over to Ms. Michele Higgs. Please go ahead, ma'am.

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Kelli. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks April Conference Call. The topic for today's call is "Street Smarts: Laying Out a Path for Community Outreach." Cheri Grant and David Percey, technical assistance coordinators coordinated the content and speakers for this call and they join us today. Together, we represent the team of technical assistance coordinators who work with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Network centers around the country.

We call the topic "Street Smarts" because often centers can develop support and valuable resources in their communities by just looking down the street. We think this might be the most fun area of the Neighborhood Networks' process. Our plan with this call is to help you learn how to build a positive image for your center, develop a message for reaching out to funding organizations and potential partners and local government, and tap into these resources in your community.

The speakers who will join us today offer expertise from different sides of this issue. First will be Ms. Caroline Herbert, senior training coordinator with the Foundation Center; followed by Jeff Carter, executive director of D.C. LEARNs and finally, Frank Gatdula, center director of the Filipino Plaza Neighborhood Networks Computer Learning Center.

This topic is about establishing relationships in the community and [how] it's central to the success of the center. Being able to present the organization in an interesting way that highlights its value to the community and gets its buy-in from the community at large, including residents, ensures the center's success. So I'll give you a minute to sharpen up your pencils.

Before I introduce our speakers, let me remind you that the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the "START business plan", contains resource materials that help you look at the capacity of the center, and provides the foundation upon which you can organize your outreach activities. It will help you look to your community and the resources that exist there for your center.

START will also help you examine the workings that make up your center's operations. Strong relationships with stakeholders in the community and a business plan, makes the center attractive to potential partners. These partnerships are vital when considering how your center can and will grow.

Let me also welcome the following centers to the neighborhood: Denver Metro Village in Colorado; Wyndham Heights in Connecticut; Parkview Towers in Pennsylvania; Proyecto Finca Galeteo Neighborhood Networks Resource Center in Puerto Rico; (Wes Pablo) Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Pennsylvania; Tulpehocken Terrace and Center in Pennsylvania; (Pablo Terrace) Neighborhood Networks Center in Pennsylvania; Willow Terrace Neighborhood Networks Center in Pennsylvania; Scottish Rite House and Neighborhood

Networks Center in Pennsylvania; and also the Ampy Community Center at Kingsley Apartments in Louisiana. Welcome to the neighborhood and congratulations.

If you have questions about the START business plan, or resident surveys, or internal marketing plans, or general questions pertaining to the Neighborhood Networks, please call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. Again, toll-free, call 888-312-2743 and visit the Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

I also want to remind listeners that an audio and verbatim transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks site in about two weeks. And a note, one of our speakers has provided some additional information that should also be available with that transcript at that time.

This afternoon, we want to connect you with the organizations that surround your center and encourage them to participate in the activities you are making available at your center. That means, developing a message for organizations that will bring interest and resources to your center and allow your residents to be connected to the community. A center cannot be successful if its light is hidden, and the resident population is not making use of it. Sometimes you just have to ask the community to come in and see.

Our speakers today will help you to see how it's done and lead you to ways to look at the process of expanding outreach efforts and activity at your own center. So, pull out those pencils.

I encourage you to visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site, and I remind you of the address, which is www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org, where you can flip through a number of success stories that will acquaint you with how successful Neighborhood Networks centers work.

Now today, we have three professionals who will offer you the benefit of their expertise in developing and expanding your outreach efforts in your community for your Neighborhood Networks center. We'll first hear from Caroline Herbert of the Foundation Center. David, would you like to introduce our guest?

David Percey: Thanks, Michele.

Our first speaker is Caroline Herbert. She's the senior training coordinator at the Foundation Center. She's responsible for designing and delivering training programs for individuals and organizations seeking funding. She also serves as a member of the selection committee for the Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management. Caroline's going to speak on developing the statement of value about what your center offers to the community and using that to reach out to foundations and funding organizations.

So I'll just hand it over to you, Caroline.

Caroline Herbert: Oh, OK – thank you, David and Michele. And as David indicated and as you had probably guessed, considering I'm coming from the Foundation Center, my perspective on this topic is looking at one specific type of partner to reach out to, namely the funding community and specifically, private institutional funders, although really a lot of what I'm talking about would also be relevant for working with individual donors. And David referred to developing a value statement. It's also called your "case for support," and it's a key document in fund-raising and really communicating with outside constituents, potential external supporters, communicating with them about really what your organization is all about.

And I'm the speaker that has the additional information that Michele referenced that's going to be available as part of the transcripts for this call, which includes an outline of these remarks and also some additional resources and an outline for what we call "Taking Stock of Your Strengths"

or an “assets inventory.” So, really thinking through what makes your organization tick, what are – what things do you do well, what are your strengths. And thinking about everything you bring to a funder and what are your strongest attributes.

In thinking this way, we’re trying to get away from the deficit mindset of focusing on your needs, you know, how needy your organization is, and think more about your strengths. And as we, as you probably know, funders look to support successful organizations and the only needs they’re concerned with are your constituent’s needs and what – and the problems you’re trying to solve.

So, thinking through the assets inventory is really helping to prepare you – helping prepare you to write up a case for support, which is a document depending on the size, history, [and] complexity of your organization. It’s a five-page document, 10 pages, 20 pages. It’s really telling the – giving the world reasons why your organization needs and merits funding support. And you do that outlining your programs, your strengths and your plans for the future.

So an assets inventory is a tool to help you prepare this thinking through, of course, your mission, what problems in society are you trying to solve; or in your community, how are you addressing these problems, what values does your organization hold, and thinking about your vision. How would your community be different on the day that you could say your mission was accomplished? And then thinking about your accomplishments, your core projects or programs, your history, your track record for success in delivering programs and services, where you serve, so talking about your geographic area, excuse me, and the population groups you serve. So, describing your constituency and the residents.

Programs and services, and things like, you know, what is special about your organization and a lot of organizations when writing a case for support, putting together some kind of assets inventory involves a number of different stakeholders. So people who work for you, people on your board of directors, other volunteers, people who are already donating to you and asking

them – getting their input on questions such as, you know, what's special about this place, as I said, or why do you work here or volunteer here, or give money, or give your time. What things does the organization do especially well?

And this case for support, you know, can be a – it's a very long document if you're tracking all your programs, all your services, your whole history. And another important aspect of this case is your organizational leadership. So, talking about your experience and expertise of your board members, volunteers and paid staff.

And this longer document is usually broken down to what are called "case statements". I don't want to get too much into fund-raising lingo, but case statements that you could present to a potential donor are used for talking points. And turning that around to go to foundations or institutional funders, what – I mean, this really is a document you can use to communicate with that world of external funders. So, it may help to think about what are they looking for and what do foundations want.

Well, foundations want to make your world a better place. They want to improve the community. I mean, we have many similar goals, but each grantmaking institution has its own philanthropic agenda. So when you approach and partner with the foundation, it's important to keep in mind that you're not only seeking support for your organization, you're helping the foundation to fulfill its mission and accomplish its own objectives.

When the foundation looks at your organization or looks at a particular program you have, questions they will ask, for one is, are you addressing a significant issue? I mean, it's, I think, pretty obvious if they don't think your mission is important, then they're not necessarily going to be a good partner. So, how well can you not only communicate the seriousness of your – of the problems you're working on, the issues facing your residents and constituents, but also how can you document your problem and what kind of supporting facts and evidence do you have?

And along with the kind of the “so-what” question, what are you’re – what outcomes are you projecting? What kind of impact will you have, or do you have? You know, how many people are you trying to find employment for, or help get back to school, or find day care?

Also, if you’re trying to find support for a particular program you do, how consistent is it with your current mission and vision? In other words, does it make sense for your organization to do this? Is it all within your area of expertise; which is the next thing a foundation would look for? And really, the competency of your leaders, your paid and volunteer leadership, is a key criteria. Do you have the leadership? Do you have systems in place to accomplish your goals if you do get funded?

And also, your reputation in relation to other organizations, and actually, this probably goes along more with what the other speakers that are talking about, in terms of forming coalitions or partnerships to approach funders, because foundations, will expect you to know the lay of the land, know who the other players are, and really be working together to help solve problems. And if, you know, if you’re not working in partnerships, then they may suggest people you should be talking to. And really, when you’re presenting yourself, does it make sense for our organization to do this? Are there other community organizations there that have an established reputation in this area? Could we work with them or does it make more sense, you know, for us to do this project?

And in approaching foundations, the first problem, of course, is whom do you approach? And that is beyond the purview of my few minutes that I have left. But that is – that’s why I put together this extra resource list that’s going to be in the transcript, because at the Foundation Center, if you’re not aware we’re a nonprofit organization set up help other nonprofits learn about funders and grants, and we have a network of free libraries around the country, so I provided a link for that.

So, you can research foundations and see who's in your city, who's in your community or who's interested in funding your subject area. And most foundations, when you go to approach them, they have various, you know, preferred ways that they want you to communicate with them like sending a letter, sending a full proposal, or even making a phone call. And maybe nonprofit leaders, when you're trying to really build that relationship with the foundation, it may start with an initial call to say – really, to introduce yourself – introduce yourself, your leadership, your organization, your project and to really link what we're doing – what you're doing to the foundation's interest. And that's why preparing things like the assets inventory, a case for support, will help you, you know, put together talking points to think about how to present yourself in an initial phone call, a meeting.

And really, what foundations are really interested in, is investing in your leadership and having the sense that you will be a good partner in solving community problems; and they're looking for effectiveness in delivering the programs, carrying out the plans you've outlined in your proposal, reliability in using funds wisely and appropriately, keeping your financial records, making sure that you're following your budget – approved budget, and communicating with the funder if there are problems.

Also, funders are looking for responsive partners, meaning you'll support the required reports on time and also keep them informed about significant accomplishments. They want to be really kept “in the loop” about your organization, not just hearing from you when you need another check.

And also, like any relationship, it depends on trust. If you run into problems, it's your obligation to inform the funder. As your partner, he or she is entitled to know and may be able to help you because, you know, foundations if they do make your grant to your program, are interested in your success. And trust paves the way to a renewal request and also grants from other

foundations in the future. And you're trying to build a philanthropic partnership, communicating with the pride in your work, your passion for your cause and commitment to the partnership being sensitive to your own interest, but also the interest of your funder. So you're trying to not only fulfill your mission, but [also] help them fulfill their philanthropic mission and contribute to their success.

And I know I'm out of my 10 minutes so ...

Michele Higgs: You did beautifully.

Caroline Herbert: ... I'll stop there.

Michele Higgs: I do want to thank you for one point specifically that you made, and I know in my own experience, I have had folks who have just been a little squeamish about making that first approach. And when you were talking about having those talking points available, having put together some information so that they can at least make that phone call to, you know, start asking about information and to give information when they're approaching a center, I mean, a foundation.

I think that was excellent information because some folks don't just know where to start.

Caroline Herbert: You're welcome. I think the – I mean, the initial phone call, it can really help to get – to build a name recognition for your organization and, you know, just start the process to help them identify with your organization and your project.

Michele Higgs: All right – well, thank you so much.

David Percey: Thank you, Caroline.

Our next speaker is Jeff Carter, executive director of D.C. LEARNs, a coalition that works to improve literacy skills and to increase the effectiveness of literacy providers. Previously, Jeff worked as education technology director at World Education's Literacy Division.

Jeff is going to speak today on using a strategy of grassroots outreach to improve service delivery and on maintaining and sustaining connections.

Jeff Carter: Great. Thanks, David. I'm going to talk about two kinds of outreach that we do and first, I'm going to talk about a little bit more about D.C. LEARNs so I can put this in context for everybody.

We are, in fact, a coalition of more than 70 organizations now that provides literacy instruction to both children, youth and adults in Washington, D.C. And just about all of those organizations are community-based nonprofits.

I was thinking as I was preparing for this that, in a sense, we are sort of a manifestation of an outreach strategy in that the coalition was formed about 10 years ago as a way for individual literacy programs in D.C. to reach out and stay connected to each other. And I'm going to return to that piece a little bit later on.

But one of the important things I want to point out is that D.C. LEARNs is a citywide organization, so we're not – we're not based or doing work in one particular community in D.C., but we're doing it citywide. We also, as a coalition, don't actually provide any direct literacy instruction ourselves. What we're doing is supporting and strengthening the work of those organizations in the city that do that, so that's the niche that we've carved out for ourselves.

Because we're citywide and represent a broad cross section of the literacy providers in the city, we are better positioned than an individual program to efficiently gather and disseminate citywide

information on literacy services and help residents locate programs that meet their needs and stuff like that. And that's also helpful for policymakers and funders because we have that citywide view.

We're doing, you know, basically we do two kinds of outreach. One is building our membership of organizations and then, the other piece is, we actually do recruitment of students for the literacy programs here in D.C. We operate a hotline and there's a toll-free number that people can call, and then we have a coordinator that helps direct people to the service that fits for them.

I'm going to start with that piece, just briefly talk about that. This may relate more to some of your work than the other piece because it's the one piece where we're working directly with clients. And really, this is in the form of sort of a "lessons learned" kind of piece.

We participated here in Washington in a "broad based" media campaign that was designed to let people know about literacy programs here in D.C. that involved billboards, and signs on buses, and radio ads, and TV ads. I call it broad based because it was definitely sort of like, you know, we just wanted to hit the entire city with this message to try and let people who might need these services know that they existed.

What we found, we think, is that this has not been a particularly effective strategy, at least in the terms of the cost and the numbers we're seeing in terms of how many people called the hotline. I'm not surprised by this. The research tells us that for adult literacy, and this was primarily an adult literacy campaign, that kind of outreach is not as effective as the grassroots kind of outreach. People – recruitment for literacy, people tend to really listen to trusted members of their immediate circle, family members, friends and community members.

And so, there really isn't an easy way to recruit people to literacy programs. You kind of got to get out into the communities and find community partners to help you do that recruiting. That

takes me now to the next piece of our outreach, which is outreach to other community organizations. And basically, I have – I originally had four, and actually as we were talking, I developed two other points about that, that I want to just briefly touch on.

Our strategy on community outreach in a way is kind of all over the place. But it's based on relationship building and good data collection. We go out – we, here in the city in Washington, there are all kinds of community events, community calendars and neighborhood and community organizations, and we found out about all of them. And it's not that hard.

Most major cities publish this information and other organizations publish this information. And we make a point to attend those events, and we, in one form or another, either just to attend, to participate, have a table there, whenever we can. And it's really not anything complicated – more complicated than that, and that's how we get to know organizations and that's how we get to know those communities. We can't do it by sitting inside our building here in downtown D.C.

The second point, which is also incredibly obvious, but I just can't stress this enough, when you're – when you're trying to form a coalition and – or any network or any kind of partnership, word of mouth is obviously really key. And by that – and word of mouth comes when you do good work. If people value your work, they'll do a lot of the recruitment for you, which brings me to the next thing.

It's important to define what it is, and this touches a little bit on what Caroline was talking about, to define what it is that you provide that's of value. In the end, we find with literacy programs, which are all under resourced and incredibly stressed out, about how much time they can put into things, they have to justify the time that they're going to spend to participate in anything outside of operating their program. So, what we've got to do is show them that participating with us is going to be worth their time, and we do that by providing services that meet their objectives.

So basically, one of the biggest objectives people have in our field is resource development. So one of the things you get when you're a member of D.C. LEARNs is resources. Some of our members don't participate much beyond that, but that's how we get them and keep them. For example, we have a couple of – a couple of times a year, we give away books. And for a lot of people, being able to obtain those kinds of resources is worth the membership there. Now we hope that they'll participate beyond that, but for some people, that's as far as they'll ever go. But at least we've got them and potentially, we can get them to participate further than that.

The – three more points about that, when we do the outreach in the community, I think it also is real important to have staff or volunteers that you feel are comfortable and good at doing that. It's easy to say, you got to get out there and shake some hands and all that stuff. We've been very lucky because the person here who does that is a very outgoing guy. He's also bilingual and so he has both the skills and the personality to do that effectively.

And then the last thing is – kind of goes onto the value piece. It takes – you got to be patient with this I think because it may take a while to gain the trust of people in your community. Once you've got that, that's a huge asset, but – and it's really, really important.

One of the things that we do is we collect all the information from programs about the kind of the classes they offer, how many open seats they have and things like that so we can share that with people who call in looking for a literacy program. And it's taken – it took about a year to get people to trust us with that kind of information because they wanted to make sure that we weren't using it in a way that would, you know, make them look bad; and we never have, and there's never been a problem like that. And so they trust us now with even more information than before.

The very last thing I want to say, and this is really one of the big challenges in terms of organizing all this, and we have not mastered this by any stretch of the imagination, and I'm curious about what people think about this, and that has to do with collecting data. Even though what we're

talking about here is all about relationship building and showing up, I forget who – I think – I think it was Woody Allen who said that 99 percent of life is showing up, and I think that's true. But you still need some way to store, retrieve and analyze the information that you received during this process.

I really don't see – I personally don't see any way around this other than having some kind of a database, a contact database, and more so because you've got to be able to do more than just store information. You also have to be able to analyze and see what the landscape looks like, what the relationships are and what the gaps are. So you have to be able to both collect, sort, and extract data in a way that helps you do that.

I think it helps to be able to visually do this and although I think it is important that graphs, and charts, and data mapping and stuff like that doesn't become an end unto itself, unless that's your mission. It really does help with analysis. And that is one that we're still working with. We were fortunate in having some donated time to help us develop a database for both our membership and also for our hotline, but we are still in the beginning stages of having the tools to actually extract data in a way that's I think most useful for analysis. So that piece is just hugely important for us and we're still working on it.

And with that, I conclude my comments and await your questions.

David Percey: Thank you very much, Jeff. I just wanted to move onto our final speaker, Frank Gatdula.

Frank is center director for Filipino Plaza Neighborhood Networks Computer Learning Center.

This center has a range of programs that address residents' health needs, serve youth and seniors in the family, including social events and an after school program. Frank will speak on developing relationships in the community and about the process of locating and selecting organizations to reach out and on building rapport.

Frank Gatdula: OK – all right, I think Dave hit a lot of good things and some of the necessary things that we're doing in good outreach. I'll talk directly about the actual partnership and the keys to its success.

Filipino Plaza is lucky to have a lot of formal and informal partnerships. We have a few and I will mention a few and I will talk about why it's been successful and why we're able to keep the partnership.

One, we have a partnership with St. Mary's Church. It's a faith-based program, providing religious service to our residents. This one has been here for six, seven years. And one is Kaiser Permanente Mobile Health Clinic. They come to the Filipino Plaza every third Wednesday of the month and provides free medical checkup and provides basic medical needs to our residents. And this one – this program has been in place for about three years now.

And we also have a partnership with a dental clinic who comes every last Thursday of each month to provide free dental checkup and cleaning to our residents. And also, we have a group of Filipino nurses that come to volunteer here at the plaza, doing – providing free blood pressure screening and blood sugar screening. And we also have the San Joaquin County Mobile Health Clinic who comes in every other month to do lots of – to do medical checkup and health screening also.

Then we have a partnership with the University of California at Davis Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources who comes to the Filipino Plaza to provide workshops and how to eat a healthy diet and conduct cooking classes for our residents. We also have a partnership with San Joaquin WorkNet who provides our Neighborhood Networks with volunteers to help in running our center. Then we have a program with San Joaquin County – a partnership with San Joaquin County Prevention Services, who conducts workshops and drug prevention program for at risk kids here in – at the Filipino Plaza.

Then we have a partnership with a school, a technical school, ITT Technical, I'm sure you've heard of them, who provides our center with – their students looking for an internship program. And another technical school that also provides our center with – our center with students looking for an actual hands-on experience, and they do their lab work here at the center.

Building a relationship with service agencies for potential partners, it is always good to know what our goals and what kind of results we want for the programs that we want to create. And, of course, it is very important to define these factors.

In my area, there are plenty of resources I can tap into, but I have to make sure that I have the right agencies for my programs and my residents. It also very important to define what are the potential benefits for the Filipino Plaza and our partners.

An example of this is our partnership with ITT Technical Institute. The partnership was like a match made in heaven. The partnership worked very well for both sides. Our center – when we – when we started our center, we needed someone to work on the networking aspect of our operation, but we didn't have any funds available to pay for someone to do the networking or maintain the networking.

And as I was making calls to local schools, I was very lucky to find out that this certain technical school was looking for an actual office or center where their students can do their real work – their real work from scratch, meaning cutting cables and running them around the reel – the learning center, doing configurations on the computers; things that they learned in theory at their school. And actually, they were able to do their actual work at my learning center. At the same time, the students were being graded by their instructors.

So, in effect, both sides benefited from this partnership. We were able to get free work from the school, and then the school was able to find a place where their students can actually put their – what they learned at school and apply it in real work.

So, the keys to – key to success in building a rapport with the agencies is to make sure that we have our objectives identified very clearly, and we are having a shared vision or having common goals, and knowing that both partners benefit from it. So, it's really important that both sides can benefit from the partnership and both sides are clear about what the objectives are.

And I can actually – if there's any questions about the actual partnership, again, I mentioned a lot of programs that I have and partner with the community and the school. So, questions – when we're opened for questions and answers, I'll be happy to answer some questions. Thank you.

David Percey: Thank you very much, Frank. I thought your comments were very helpful in terms of building a rapport – some very clear points there that I think are pretty useful.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. Thank you. Thanks, David; thanks, Frank; thank you, Jeff; and thank you, Caroline. I mean the kinds of things that I'm listening to are, you know, really encouraging. And, Frank, you were mentioning, you know, partnering with the school and I'm thinking about trying to do that with the center that I'm working with, and you're letting me know it actually works. So, this is good – this is good to know.

Kelli, I'd like to know if we have any questions on the line.

Operator: At this time if you do have a question, please signal us by pressing star one on your Touch-Tone telephone. Again, at this time for questions, please press star one.

And we'll go first to Betty Howton.

Betty Howton: Yes.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Betty. Thanks for calling.

Betty Howton: Thank you. Hello, everyone. I have a question. I came in a little late, so I apologize. I don't know who the first presenter was. But they were talking about board members and organized leadership.

My question is, in working with foundations and applying for funding grants, I find that a lot of the foundations are looking for a 501(c)(3) entity, which I am not a 501(c)(3). And as far as partnering with the school, I do that now. I partner with Columbus Public Schools and we have three programs that are being supported by them. My question again is whether or not you would advise the Neighborhood Networks locations to become a 501(c)(3) and also, I wanted to know what significant issues, or what significant things, do you think that the foundations would be looking for in particular?

Michele Higgs: Caroline, do you want to take that one?

Caroline Herbert: I can start. I mean, certainly, I don't think – I don't think any of us can tell you or your individual centers what your legal status should be. I mean, you're right that foundations – well, actually, I mean, by law they're set up only to make grants to the organizations that have the charitable status, in other words, 501(c)(3).

But actually, this is right on the same topic of partnerships because one, I know a lot of, well, community-based organizations, emerging nonprofits can enter into more formal partnerships with existing 501(c)(3)'s as sponsors, and there are technical terms like "fiscal sponsor" or "fiscal agent" that you probably heard ...

Betty Howton: Yes.

Caroline Herbert: ... where – and that would be a very formal partnership where if you were partnering with, you know, an existing 501(c)(3) organization, the foundation, you know, may be able to make a grant to your fiscal sponsor that would support your work. So – I mean, that is a possibility other than, you know, besides going out and getting your own 501(c)(3) status.

And then in terms of what significant issues, every foundation is different, excuse me, in terms of its own philanthropic mission, and that's – yes, I mean, that's part of the research process to find out which foundations are interested in working with, you know, different population groups you work with or the issue, you know, like with Jeff's organization, working with literacy or helping people with employment issues. I mean, every foundation is going to have a different idea about what would be a significant issue and they have a different priority. So there isn't one answer for that.

Betty Howton: OK. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Caroline, I'm also going to just make a little contribution here that putting together a 501(c)(3) organization particularly for a Neighborhood Networks center is something that can happen, but it has to have the buy-in from the property owner as well as the center. And it's something that, if there's questions further, Betty, about this process, I would suggest you make a call to the toll-free number and perhaps one of the technical assistance coordinators can give you some further discussion on that.

Betty Howton: Oh, OK.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Betty Howton: I think [I'll] have [to] put that question in to the owners of the property. I work for the owners, so I did talk with them, or at least, I've approached them about us getting our own 501(c)(3), but I haven't gotten a response on that.

Michele Higgs: OK, you're getting that started.

Betty Howton: Yes. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Certainly. Operator, is there anyone else on the queue?

Operator: Yes. We'll go next to Linda Talbert.

Michele Higgs: Great. Hi, Linda.

Linda Talbert: Hi, how are you guys doing?

Michele Higgs: Real good.

Linda Talbert: Good. I have a question – I can't remember who was talking about partnerships, but my question is, how do you usually – when you approach the partners or people you want to have as a partner, how do you approach them and how do you keep them as a partner? I mean, some things you can do to make sure that you're doing what they expect of you to keep them as a partner? Because I'm partnering with a school and I've – well, I even have an MOA with them as far as a partner. And the thing is, a couple of things that I have asked for, basically everything, I have yet to receive because I have an after school program here at my Neighborhood Networks center. And I asked for things like books, you know, teacher's editions of the books since we don't have a teacher here, you know, so that we can stay online with what they're teaching, so we

can still follow their guidelines. I have yet to receive those things. But I do have MOAs with these schools.

Michele Higgs: Frank, is that one you ...

Frank Gatdula: Yes – well, what I do is actually, I go to the school. I actually went to the school and then looked at their programs that they had, and the particular class that I was able to partner with was the one that we were looking for the things that I needed. So, in your case, I would suggest you go to the school and actually talk to the people because sometimes, you know, letters and phone calls are not enough and you just have to be persistent and go there. That's what I would suggest because I've actually done that.

And, in fact, one – my technical advisor, Cheri Grant, when she came here in California, we actually went to one of the agencies that we were trying to partner with and make sure that everything was clear from both sides.

Linda Talbert: OK. Because I have – I've walked the pavement there and I've been there several times actually to – you got to remember, though, I'm in a very small town here. And I'm not using that as an excuse and I wish they wouldn't, but I think they are and it's just that I have really – I've been there several times. I even went to one of the schools that I have an MOA with. Let me tell you, it was really weird, because I sat there for like, almost an hour, and the principal that I had been talking with initially, he walked right by me.

Frank Gatdula: I think, you know, one of the things that I mentioned is that the – you have to remember, you know, a shared vision and a common goal. Maybe your intention of having the partnership was very good, but the other partner, the school, maybe they have something different in mind, and maybe they think that having a partnership with you would not really work for them, or would not really benefit what they're doing at the school.

Linda Talbert: Yes.

Frank Gatdula: But, then again, you said you have an MOU already, or MOA.

Linda Talbert: Yes, I do have an Memorandum of Agreement with both of the schools – elementary and middle school, because that's the children I serve and I'm just trying to figure out some of the ways that I can maybe, you know, get a good point here so we can get some things going pretty much.

Frank Gatdula: Do you have a contact person there that you can actually talk and just do a follow-up? Maybe bug them for it? Sometimes that works.

Linda Talbert: I've done all of that, but I'm going to be doing some other things actually. I'm not giving up. I love my kids, so I'm not giving up.

Frank Gatdula: Maybe it's time to start looking for another program and see what can work for you.

Linda Talbert: Actually, I have – I have some other contact people that I'm dealing with. I just knew that the school would be one very important part of working with the children after school dealing with their homework and, you know, their academics and things, so that was very important to me, I would think, as far as that was concerned. OK.

Frank Gatdula: OK. Well, I hope it will work out for you.

Linda Talbert: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you much. Operator?

Operator: We'll go next to Michell Higgs.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Hello.

Hello.

Michele Higgs: Hi.

Joyce Mortimer: Hi – my name is (Joyce Mortimer).

Michele Higgs: Hi, Joyce.

Joyce Mortimer: I'm the technical assistance coordinator as well, and in response to Linda Talbert's question, I think that you also probably have tried this, but there's no harm in doing it again, bringing some parents with you to the school and requesting an appointment to meet with the president of the school – with the principal or, with the principal's designated representative, to just really hammer home how important it is for you and how committed all the parents are to seeing that their children keep pace with everyone else. OK. There's strength in numbers.

You've done it before, but you have to do it again. Repetition is the key. Sometimes principals and others treat citizens as if they're parents. Parents tend to be a little bit in awe of principals, and what everyone has to remember is that this is a partnership to help strengthen the community.

Michele Higgs: There you go.

David Percey: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Joyce – and that brings up a point that I was considering while you were talking, and in that – in that we're talking about a small town for Linda. You know, there might be some influence that could be brought to bear by the local politicians if there's, you know, an opportunity to, you know, speak with someone who could come from a different perspective that could, you know, lean a little bit on the school to get them to cooperate and, you know, stand up to their agreement. But I like the idea of marching the parents in there. Absolutely.

Joyce, you still there?

Joyce Mortimer: Yes.

Michele Higgs: Did you have more to give to that?

Joyce Mortimer: Well, we have several of us here and so, some other people have a few questions to ask.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Jennifer Brower: Hi, Michele, this is Jennifer Brower.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Jennifer.

Jennifer Brower: Hi – I'm also a technical assistance coordinator, and my question was for anyone to answer, what kinds of data mapping does the coalition, D.C. LEARNs, undertake and how do you make this information available to member organizations?

Jeff Carter: Well, I guess I'll start with that one.

What we do for literacy programs is we gather information about their geographic location, the classes that they offer. The key for us was figuring out what kind of data – why are we gathering this data, and the reason we're gathering it is to assist people in locating a program that was appropriate to their needs. So all of the data started off looking from that perspective. You know, where is the program located, what kinds of programs do they offer, when do they offer them, do they offer childcare, things like that.

We put all that stuff into a database that someone – it's a homegrown database that someone developed, although I don't think it's something – it was so that the data was so complicated that it couldn't be done with a software package. And that data is collected and then we can access that data through a Web interface that again was designed for us.

You know, I say it's simple – it's simple to a programmer, but it's certainly not complicated kinds of data. And what we – what we wanted to do right from the get go, and this kind of goes back to that issue of trust, we wanted to make sure that everything we collected was then available to the public. So we don't have any – we don't ask for anything – unless it's something that someone really doesn't want out there in the public, all that information is available through our Web site. So everything that our hotline coordinator can see about a program, anyone else can see as well.

Ultimately, in fact, we really see the information referral stuff as, you know, potentially distributed and not just based in one office here. So that was one reason. But, also, we just thought it would be more useful that way. Granted, a lot of people looking for literacy programs are not strong readers and don't use the Web, but a lot of folks that work with them, do.

And when people access that information, they can search by – and Washington, D.C., is divided up into geographically, divided up into wards. And people can enter their zip codes and find programs that are based in an area, you know, near where they work. It's not a science, because

programs may be based in one location and offer services at satellite locations, but it's not bad.

We can always get people better information if they call in.

We'd like to present that information in different ways. We'd like to give people – we'd like to find a tool that allows us to have people search that database and get a map that's pretty much all visual and doesn't have a lot of words. And, you know, we've got actually some money to do that this year.

And the other thing we need to do, and this is hugely important to us that I think other organizations probably struggle with as well, we got to get our information out there in more than just English. So, by the end of this year, we should have all that information in Spanish as well.

I don't know if that – I don't know if that's helpful, but that's what we're doing anyway.

Jennifer Brower: OK, thank you. That was helpful.

Michele Higgs: Hello.

Jennifer Brower: Hello.

Michele Higgs: Hi, we need pick up on the rest of the folks who called in. Kelli, have we got anybody else?

Operator: Yes, we'll go next to Heather Wiedenfeld.

Michele Higgs: Thanks.

Heather Wiedenfeld: Hi.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Heather.

Heather Wiedenfeld: Hi, this is Heather Wiedenfeld with a question for Frank Gatdula...ITT Tech and they set up and maintain his network. I think that's a great option and I was just curious, like, when you made that initial contact, who did you talk to, who did you ask for, which department did you go to just to make that initial contact to make sure you get to the right person?

Frank Gatdula: OK – that's a good question. Yes. They have – the person that I talked to was the one in charge of their internship program.

Heather Wiedenfeld: So, you just asked to -- in charge of internships ...

Frank Gatdula: Right – the internship program because a lot of times they have students that need to look for an internship, so they need a place to do some internship program. And you have to make sure that it's an unpaid internship, because there are paid internship programs. That's what I told them. And actually, they sent me two interns at that time.

So, yes, the person in charge of the internship program.

Heather Wiedenfeld: OK, great.

Frank Gatdula: OK?

Heather Wiedenfeld: All right, thank you.

David Percey: For the internship program, do you need to have a master's degree to be able to get a ...

Frank Gatlula: No – it's anyone – it's any student that is taking any course and they want to do an internship program in their specialty. So, if someone is taking computer classes, then they would – obviously, they would look for an internship program that will give them a chance to practice what they learn in school and yet, it's something similar – it's something like, you know, a secretarial or receptionist-type classes that they're taking, then they can find a place where they can do an internship program in that area; the same as if they're in the medical field.

And with my Neighborhood Networks, having 12 computers, yes, I could use an intern without having to pay them.

David Percey: Thank you.

Frank Gatlula: OK.

Michele Higgs: A good way to get folks in. Kelli, is there anyone else on the line?

Kelli: We do have one other question that will come from Betty Howton.

Betty Howton: I didn't have a question. I just wanted to respond to Linda regarding the school system, because I work with the school system here in Columbus, OH. And what I did was, I met with, because the principals have to answer to someone. So, I met with the deputy superintendent of schools, and also two members of the school board who were up for reelection. So that was helpful in getting the – getting to the people that needed to help – that I wanted to help me in developing programs through the school system.

So I would suggest that you make contact with – again, with those political people and also with the deputy school superintendent, and I'm sure that there is someone that is a curriculum

administrator. And once you meet with the curriculum administrator, then they will direct you to the principal. But, by the time you reach that point, they have already spoken with the principal.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. Thanks, Betty.

Betty Howton: You're welcome.

Michele Higgs: Kelli, have we anyone else on the line?

Operator: We do have another comment from Chad Chadwick.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Chad Chadwick: I just called to say thank you for each of the speakers. You've got a lot of very sound experience for us to draw from. Frank, I need to get your last name. How do you spell your last name? I'm sorry.

Frank Gatdula: It's OK. It's Gatdula. It's spelled G-A-T-D-U-L-A.

Chad Chadwick: Great. Thank you very much. That was it.

Michele Higgs: OK, great. Well, it looks like we've come to the end of another conference call, folks. We just have a few minutes left and if there are no more questions, Kelli?

Operator: There are no further questions at this time.

Michele Higgs: OK, then we're going to roll on.

I just want to remind you that our next monthly conference call will take place on Tuesday, May 16, 2006, and the topic will be "Who's Who On Your Board, Identifying and Developing a Board for your Neighborhood Networks Center".

I want to thank Caroline Herbert and Jeff Carter, and Frank Gatlula for being with us this afternoon and offering a lot of good information for participants on the call. Thank you so much. And I want to remind all of you of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative.

Aside from the Neighborhood Networks information center line, 888-312-2743, you will find numerous resources and information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. On the Web site, you'll see success stories that might spark an idea for you or help you validate a plan, and you can feel free to toot your own horn in the success stories as well and tell us about the good activities that are going on at your center. The Web site will show you how, or you can give us a call. Again, that number is 888-312-2743.

Again, thanks to our speakers, thank you to David, thank you to Cheri for putting together a wonderful call for today. Again, thanks all of you for joining us for this conversation.

Take good care. Talk to you next time.

Operator: That will conclude today's conference. You may now disconnect and have a pleasant day.

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